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ABSTRACT

The DICSIE (describe, interact, control, select, instruct, and evaluate) model provides a systematic approach to personalizing instruction in teacher education. First, the individual learning style of the student is determined and a description is given by the instructor of the teaching methods most commonly used in the classroom. Awareness of the importance of interaction between student and learning style, instructor and learning style, instructor and teaching style, as well as student and teaching style, is of fundamental importance in this model. Once identification is made of different cognitive styles, teachers and students may systematically plan how they will incorporate their personal styles into studying and instructing. Student involvement is increased by diversified teaching styles and the model encourages teachers to be flexible and versatile in selecting a variety of appropriate instructional strategies. Ongoing evaluation of interaction between student and instructor provides the instructor with more complete and accurate information about the capabilities and progress of the student. (JD)

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A Model for Personalizing Instruction in Teacher Education

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A Model for Personalizing Instruction in Teacher Education

Instructors in higher education often teach as though all college students learn all content material in the same way at the same rate. They assume a single method of instruction is adequate for every subject area, every individual and for every teacher. Although an instructional approach may be compatible with the teacher, it may produce different learning results when the method interacts with the learning styles of the students. The simplest and most insistent message from the literature is that there can be no single 'right' way to teach or learn. Furthermore, a consistent extreme approach to teaching will usually make learning more difficult.

> Different individuals need different types of learning activities. In most college courses, there is a single teacher and a single set of instructional materials. Not all individuals learn effectively by the same method or type of activity. Different individuals need different types of learning actitivies. For all students to use identical methods no matter what their ability or personality is a questionable procedure (Diamond, 1977, 17).

Even though the ultimate responsibility for learning rests with the student, the teacher educator also has a responsibility to teach as effectively as possible. In order to accomplish this aim, faculty need to reconsider several false assumptions about students in higher education: 1) that the experience and abilities of students in class are, generally, the same; 2) that all students take about the same time to learn in the same way the same thing; 3) that all college students are abstract thinkers; 4) that college students will naturally learn easier and better than secondary students; and 5) that instructors knowledgeable about subject matter are effective teachers. More studies are

needed to investigate the learning differences of students in higher education to provide additional information about how to accommodate them in the classroom (Glasser, 1977; Messick, 1976; Entwistle, 1981). Creative approaches for personalizing instruction in higher education must be considered.

Description of DICSIE Model

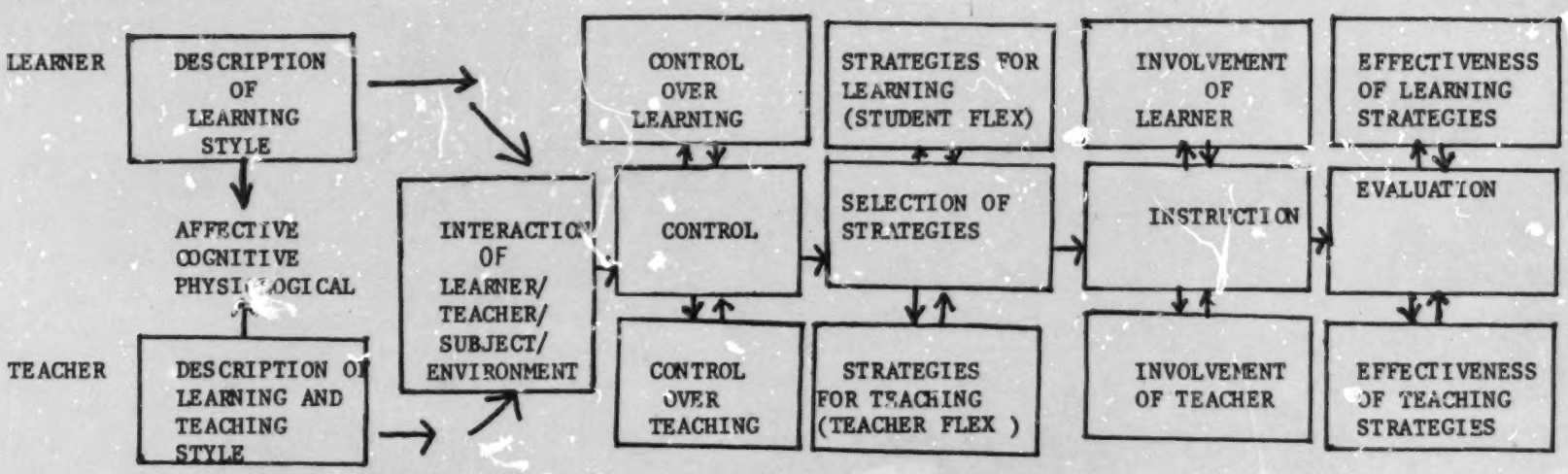
This writer developed and is implementing with her classes at The University of Georgia a model which systematically provides a more personal approach to instruction in teacher education. By incorporating the DICSIE Model (see Table 1) for personalizing instruction through learning and teaching styles into a course, an instructor is integrating his/her own learning/teaching style with the learning styles of students. By designing a course based on this Model of Describe, Interact, Control, Select, Instruct, and Evaluate, an instructor is involving the student in the learning process; thus, both students and instructors are assuming responsibility for the learning which should occur in the college classroom. Wilder (1983) maintains that faculty members and administrators must regard an a primary purpose in higher education is to help students gain "personal meaning" from their education.

The DICSIE Model for personalizing instruction includes the following components:

Describe

Learning style can be described as a set of factors, behaviors, and attitudes which facilitates learning for an individual in a given situation (Brown & Hayden, 1980). Thus,

TABLE 1



DICSIE MODEL FOR PERSONALIZING INSTRUCTION

when an individual learns, a learning style is used that is unique; however, the style may vary depending on the task and previous experience. A useful approach for understanding and identifying learning styles is to consider three areas: cognitive, affective, and physiological (Keefe, 1979; Cornett, 1982). The cognitive area refers to the ways information is processed (Messick, 1976; Witkin, 1979) and to the dominance of left/right brain hemisphere (McCarthy, 1980). Affective characteristics are related to motivation, responsibility, persistence, etc. (Dunn & Dunn, 1978). The physiological aspect includes the sensory perceptions of auditory, visual, tactual, and kinesthetic (Barbe, 1979). Teacher educators need not know every student's individual learning style but they ought to be aware of the different ways an individual can learn. In addition, an instructor should be able to describe his/her own teaching style and identify the strategies most commonly used in the classroom.

Interact

To make a difference in behavior, self-awareness is essential. Understanding about his/her learning style will enable the student to be more systematic and rational in approaching learning. The Socrates adage of "Know thyself" is especially appropriate in reference to learning style. Amazingly, students and instructors often do not realize that individual learning styles exist until identification and interaction occurs.

College instructors should know the possible differences in learning styles of students and also know their own learning styles. After becoming aware of their own learning styles, then

professors should be more accepting and accommodating of student learning style differences. Interaction occurs between student and learning style, instructor and learning style, instructor and teaching style, as well as student and teaching style. In addition, the environment and subject matter all interrelate in the teaching learning process.

Control

During the control phase of this model, teachers and students should systematically plan how they will incorporate their personal styles into studying and instructing. Too often college students enter a learning situation not realizing they are using inappropriate learning strategies. After knowing their learning styles, then the individual can think seriously about their strengths and determine when certain learning strategies would be appropriate. Students need to be in control of their learning by understanding what methods are most effective for them. Teachers must also concentrate on what they can control-which is their own actions and their own teaching strategies (Hyman & Rosoff, 1984).

Select

The following recommendation was emphasized in the Final Report of the Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education (National Institute of Education, 1984):

> "Faculty should make greater use of active modes of learning and require that students take greater responsibility for their selecting and learning" (27).

By diversifying teaching styles, student involvement is increased. An important purpose in education should be to

motivate students to use more flexible, versatile, and integrated styles of learning. Thus, college teachers should be motivated to be versatile in selecting a variety of appropriate instructional strategies. Lowman (1984) describes in detail a number of teaching techniques from which a college instructor can choose to be effective. For instance, if "language teachers are able to predict which students learn better by which set of stimuli, they might pattern language courses in such a way as to allow students to devote more effort to those skills which they learn less easily" (Conner, 1983, 23).

Instruct

The student needs to be involved in learning, not be just a passive recipient. Students should have the opportunity to work alone, in pairs or with a team in various situations. An instructor should be certain to include visuals, manipulatives, tapes, etc., when appropriate, to enhance the more traditional lecture approach and to accommodate diverse learning styles (Reiff, 1983). Interactive video/computer assisted instruction is an innovative strategy certain to gain in popularity. By varying the presentation of information, the instructor will motivate, create interest, demonstrate concern for individual differences, and be a model of flexibility. "Versatility is essential in the classroom. What applies to the student who is reponsible only for his own learning applies even more strongly to the teacher who is guiding the learning of many people" (Entwistle, 1981, 238).

Evaluate

Evaluation should occur to determine the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Alternative evaluation methods will provide the instructor with more complete and accurate information about the capabilities of the students. For instance, students working in pairs, reacting to simulated situations, responding to questions on either audio tapes or computers are ways material can be tested by some means other than with pencil/paper.

Students needing more structure and visual aids would benefit from study guides or study questions. Practice tests would be helpful for the student to become acquainted with the "testing style" of the teacher. Within the school experience, the learner should be exposed to both subjective and objective tests. The advantages and disadvantages which exist for each type test will be different for different learners.

Summary

This article provides a rationale for accommodating individual differences in the college classroom. The DICSIE Model which includes the phases of Describe, Interact, Control, Select, Interact, and Evaluate is a systematic approach for personalizing instruction in higher education. Even when teaching a single subject to mature students, a professor can vary instructional strategies to meet those differences. With a little effort and creativeness, the college classroom can be a model for not only what to teach but also how to teach.

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